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PENNSYLVANIA HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

M I N U T E S

TIME: 5:05 P.M.

Monthly Meeting

Hazleton Community Center - Gym

225 East 4th Street

Hazleton, PA 18201

October 28, 2024

1 Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
2 Monthly Meeting
3 October 28, 2024

4
5 COMMISSIONERS:

6
7 Joel Bolstein, Esquire, Chair
8 Dr. Raquel O. Yiengst, Vice Chair - Via telephone
9 Mayur Patel, Esquire, Secretary - Via telephone
10 Dr. Rad Agrawal - Via telephone
11 Michael Hardiman, Esquire - Via telephone
12 Curtis Jones - Absent
13 Aleena Sorathia - Via telephone

14
15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

16
17 Chad Dion Lassiter, MSW

18
19 DEPUTY CHIEF COUNSEL

20
21 Morgan Williams, Esquire

22
23 COMMISSION COUNSEL

24
25 Vacant

26
27 STAFF PRESENT:

28
29 Amanda Brothman, Director of Communications
30 Desiree Chang, Director of Education - Via telephone
31 Adrian Garcia, Director of Enforcement
32 Caroline Eister, Director of Fair Housing and
33 Commercial Property
34 Darlene Hemerka, Esquire, Hearing Examiner
35 Amanda Martin, Clerical Assistant III
36 Sheryl Meck, Director, Civil Rights Division
37 LaDawn Robinson, Regional Office Director, Pittsburgh
38 - Via telephone
39 Zulay Rojas, Special Assistant to Executive Director
40 Tamara Shehadeh-Cope, Hearing Examiner
41 Heather Roth, Regional Office Director, Harrisburg
42 Vacant, Regional Office Director, Philadelphia
43 Vacant, Director of Policy, Intergovernmental
44 Affairs, and Mediation

45
46 ALSO PRESENT:

47 Kimberly Gavlick, Title II Adult Education and Family
48 Literacy Administrator, Luzerne County Community
49 College
50 Anne Gruner, Associate Attorney at Diaspora Law

1 ***

2 Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission

3 October 28, 2024

4 ***

5 MEETING CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING STATEMENT

6 The time is now 5:05 p.m.

7 Joel Bolstein, Chairperson of the Pennsylvania
8 Human Relations Commission, welcomed all to the
9 monthly meeting of the Pennsylvania Human Relations
10 Commission. He noted an Executive Session, and a
11 Compliance Session were held earlier in the day and
12 now the public meeting

13 Pursuant to Section 711 (a) of the Sunshine Act,
14 65 P.S. § 711(a), this Commission meeting may be
15 recorded by attendees. Voluntary participation in
16 the meeting constituted consent to be recorded.

17 The meeting was advertised in accordance with the
18 provisions of the Sunshine Act. There had been a
19 closed session to discuss compliance matters,
20 management updates and adjudicative case
21 deliberations.

22 At the beginning of the meeting, there will be a
23 brief business portion and then guests will be
24 invited to introduce themselves and any organizations
25 they represent. The Commission welcomed comments

1 from the audience. The Commission has jurisdiction
2 over discrimination in employment, housing,
3 education, and public accommodations.

4 The Commission welcomed public comments about
5 equal opportunity and civil rights issues and any
6 problems of discrimination being encountered. Any
7 statements expressed during the public session by
8 members of the public represent opinions and beliefs
9 of the speaker and not the opinions and beliefs of
10 the Commission.

11 The Commission values everybody's public
12 partnership in promoting equal opportunity and wanted
13 to hear about the work that any of the different
14 organizations have been working on. The Commission
15 cannot hear specifics of any open investigations or
16 cases that we might have to rule on in the future.

17 Joel Bolstein, Chairperson, convened the monthly
18 meeting of the Pennsylvania Human Relations
19 Commission. Several commissioners were noted to be
20 appearing remotely. A quorum was present. The
21 meeting was called to order.

22

23 ADOPTION OF AGENDA

24 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

25 From Commissioners who are on the phone

1 I would ask for a motion to adopt the
2 agenda. Is there a motion?

3 COMMISSIONER HARDIMAN:

4 So moved.

5 COMMISSIONER YIENGST:

6 Second.

7 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

8 It's been moved by Commissioner Hardiman
9 and seconded Commissioner Yiengst. All
10 in favor of the motion please say aye?

11 [The motion passed unanimously.]

12 ***

13 MINUTES

14 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

15 We have Minutes from the August 26, 2024
16 public meeting. I need a motion to
17 approve those minutes.

18 COMMISSIONER AGRAWAL:

19 So moved.

20 COMMISSIONER HARDIMAN:

21 Second.

22 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

23 Moved by Commissioner Agrawal, seconded
24 by Commissioner Hardiman. Any comments
25 on the Minutes?

1 a brief summary for Case Nos. 202101691 and
2 202300175, people that were discriminated against
3 when attempting to get services from Target Master
4 and refused to comply with the store's dress code
5 policy, which required that no head gear be worn
6 other than a forward facing baseball cap. The
7 Complainants were discriminated against when
8 Respondent refused to make a reasonable accommodation
9 to the dress code policy.

10 The Hearing Examiner recommended an amount to be
11 paid for failure to comply because of their religion.

12 Respondent shall pay the lump sum and attorney's
13 fees and costs, which represents humiliation.]

14 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

15 Our Hearing Examiner has now summarized
16 that case for us. I'm going to ask if
17 the Commissioners want to make a motion
18 to adopt the Proposed Findings of Fact
19 and Conclusions of Law and the Final
20 Order. Is there a motion?

21 COMMISSIONER AGRAWAL:

22 So moved.

23 COMMISSIONER HARDIMAN:

24 Second.

25 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

1 It's been moved by Commissioner Agrawal,
2 and seconded by Commissioner Hardiman.

3 Is there any discussion? Not
4 hearing any, all those in favor of the
5 motion please say aye?

6 [The motion passed unanimously.]

7 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

8 The Order, Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions
9 of Law are now final in the case of Singh vs. Tommy
10 Gunn, d/b/a Target Master, Case No. 202101691 and
11 Martin vs. Tommy Gunn, d/b/a Target Master Case No.
12 202300175.

13 ***

14 RECOMMENDATION

15 [Tamara Shehadeh-Cope, Esquire, Hearing Examiner,
16 provided a brief summary for Lanning vs. Electric
17 City Aquarium, LLC, Case No. 201902180. Complainant
18 was unlawfully retaliated against when Respondent
19 terminated her employment after making the report.
20 The figure represents an additional six percent,
21 findings remain unchanged.]

22 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

23 Our Hearing Examiner has now summarized
24 that case. I'm going to ask the
25 Commissioners if anyone wants to make a

1 motion to adopt the Proposed Findings of
2 Fact and Conclusions of Law and the
3 Final Order. Is there a motion?

4 COMMISSIONER AGRAWAL:

5 So moved.

6 COMMISSIONER YIENGST:

7 Second.

8 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

9 I heard Commissioner Agrawal make the
10 motion, and Commissioner Yiengst
11 seconded.

12 Is there any discussion? Not
13 hearing any, all those in favor of the
14 motion please say aye?

15 [The motion passed unanimously.]

16 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

17 [The Order, Proposed Findings of Fact and Conclusions
18 of Law are now final in the case of Lanning vs.
19 Electric City Aquarium, LLC, Case No. 201902180, PHRC
20 Case No. 17F202060103.]

21 ***

22 CONCILIATION AGREEMENTS/CONSENT ORDERS

23 [Chair Bolstein explained that Conciliation
24 Agreements and Consent Orders are when somebody has
25 filed a complaint with the PHRC, and the parties have

1 agreed on a way of settling that case. When those
2 final orders come before the Commissioners, the
3 Commission will adopt them as final orders. The
4 substance of those conciliation agreements and
5 consent orders are not discussed. The Commission
6 votes on whether or not to adopt them.]

7 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

8 So for Conciliation Agreements and
9 Consent Orders under 6, 7 and 8 on our
10 agenda, is there a motion to adopt
11 those?

12 COMMISSIONER HARDIMAN:

13 So moved.

14 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

15 Second?

16 COMMISSIONER YIENST:

17 Second.

18 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

19 I hear Commissioner Hardiman and second,
20 Commissioner Yiengst.

21 So it's been moved and seconded. Al
22 those in favor of approving the
23 Conciliation Agreements and Consent
24 Orders, 201903285, 202100421 and
25 202100737, Numbers 6, 7 and 8 on the

1 agenda, please say aye? Opposed?

2 [The motion passed unanimously.]

3 ***

4 REQUESTS FOR PRELIMINARY HEARING

5 [Chair Bolstein noted several requests for
6 Preliminary Hearings. He explained these are cases
7 that have been reviewed by the Commission and staff
8 and were dismissed. Occasionally, the complainants
9 will request for a preliminary hearing, which is
10 evaluated with the staff to make a recommendation.]

11 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

12 We have Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14
13 on the agenda, Case Nos. 202201207,
14 202201607, 202202412, 202302754,
15 202304288 and 202400177. Is there a
16 motion to accept the Recommendation to
17 Deny the Requests for Preliminary
18 Hearings?

19 COMMISSIONER YIENGST:

20 I make that motion.

21 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

22 Is there a second?

23 COMMISSIONER HARDIMAN:

24 Second.

25 CHAIR BOLSTEIN:

1 Commissioner Hardiman. Is there any
2 discussion about any of these matters?

3 Not hearing any, all in favor please
4 say aye?

5 [The motion passed unanimously.]

6 ***

7 MOTIONS AND OTHER ACTIONS - None.

8 ***

9 APPROVED FOR PUBLIC HEARING DOCKET - None.

10 ***

11 PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - None.

12 ***

13 MANAGEMENT REPORTS

14 [Chair Bolstein introduced Executive Director Dion
15 Lassiter to review another part of the meeting that
16 involves updated reports and brief updates from
17 senior leaders.]

18 ***

19 INTRODUCTIONS

20 [Commissioners, Staff, Executive Director, Deputy
21 Chief Counsel were requested to introduce themselves
22 for the record.]

23 ***

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

25 [Chad Dion Lassiter, Executive Director, explained

1 management reports share information with regard to
2 the Commission's positions and matters being worked
3 on.

4 There is professional development, civil and
5 human rights engagement. Over the past month, he
6 reported being in partnership with PASSHE (PA State
7 System of Higher Education), a part of the school
8 system regarding diversity summit planning.

9 The Beloved Community Tour will visit all 67
10 counties, visiting 34 so far, asking the counties to
11 note some of the challenges and success stories being
12 seen in their communities.

13 PHRC is called upon to do much of DEI training
14 for multiple entities and organizations regarding
15 diversity, equity, inclusion.

16 Executive Director noted that on Native American
17 Indigenous Day, formerly known as Christopher
18 Columbus Day, PHRC was present in Hazleton for the
19 Hazleton Youth Program.

20 He noted being in Blair County for the NAACP
21 Gala. No Hate in our State townhalls are also
22 conducted where this is an occurrence and/or incident
23 of hate.

24 All were requested to follow PHRC on social
25 media, Linked-In, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter,

1 now X and now on Flickr Photos.

2 Executive Director Lassiter noted SJAs (Social
3 Justice Ambassadors) from around the state help with
4 PHRC work. ACs (Advisory Councils) are also a part
5 of the PHRC work. He noted Hazleton Advisory Council
6 is very dedicated and passionate.

7 On Thursday, October 31, 2024, the senior
8 management team will be embarking upon a senior
9 management volunteer outing with an organization such
10 as a soup kitchen or clothing place.

11 PHRC does a social justice outreach, which
12 includes fair housing and DEI training, law
13 enforcement training, lunch and learns, diversity
14 speaks, and also on YouTube.]

15 ***

16 HEARING EXAMINER

17 [Hearing Examiner provided a report of current
18 cases.]

19 ***

20 CHIEF COUNSEL

21 [Morgan Williams, Esquire, Deputy Chief Counsel,
22 noted three cases in Commonwealth Court, six cases in
23 Commonwealth Court on enforcement of Commission
24 orders, three subpoenas, and final orders. Two cases
25 were moving up to the Third Circuit. There are cases

1 up for public hearing.]

2 ***

3 DIRECTOR OF ENFORCEMENT

4 [Adrian Garcia, Director of Enforcement, noted
5 working with the Office of Chief Counsel and all
6 regional directors on policies and procedures,
7 operating the Office of Enforcement Administration
8 regarding consent orders and communicating with
9 respondents regarding matters. Mr. Garcia noted
10 operating the Office of Appeals which starts the
11 process.

12 Mr. Garcia discussed starting a new federal case
13 processing year, which is from October 1 through
14 September 30, and noted more than 1,400 cases were
15 processed the past year.]

16 ***

17 DIRECTOR OF FAIR HOUSING AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

18 [Caroline Eister reported working on the 2025 Housing
19 Equality Conference, which will be held in Pittsburgh
20 in April of 2025.

21 She discussed robust outreach for housing.
22 Starting December 1 on PCN and every other Sunday for
23 five months the outreach coordinator will offer
24 presentations. A Fair Housing Power Hour series
25 presents challenges and opportunities in rural

1 communities. Ms. Eister noted November is Fair
2 Housing National Origin month, December LGBTQ+ and
3 Housing Rights.]

4 ***
5 DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
6 [Executive Director Lassiter noted the position of
7 Director of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs was
8 currently vacant. This person works with
9 commissioners and members of senior management and
10 staff to get PHRC to the table in many ways. He
11 commented the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act (PHRA)
12 allows the PHRC to create policy and to drive and
13 implement policy. People should recognize that they
14 have the right to be protected under the law and that
15 the greatest power "is that of telling your story
16 that you've been discriminated against."

17 Executive Director discussed quality assurance
18 and customer service. He noted the mediation
19 division within the PHRC tries to settle challenges
20 between respondents and complainants. He reported,
21 as of August 2024, on the figure for economic
22 settlements. He also noted the mediation division
23 total amount of settlements since 2020.]

24 ***
25 REGIONAL DIRECTOR - PITTSBURGH REGIONAL OFFICE

1 [Executive Director Lassiter reiterated that the Fair
2 Housing Conference, which will be held in Pittsburgh
3 for the second year in a row.]

4 ***

5 REGIONAL DIRECTOR - HARRISBURG REGIONAL OFFICE

6 [Executive Director Lassiter noted that Heather Roth
7 has also been doubling as Interim Regional Director
8 for Philadelphia.]

9 Ms. Roth noted that the offices receive phone
10 calls from individuals inquiring about whether to
11 file a complaint. In the month of September 2024,
12 the office spoke to approximately 150 people who
13 chose to have complaints drafted, which then
14 proceeded to investigations, and 12 were resolved
15 through mediation or findings and settlements.

16 Ms. Roth also reported, in September 2024, there
17 were two violations of the Act, which were currently
18 under investigation.]

19 ***

20 DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

21 [Amanda Brothman noted as Director of Communications
22 she handles all internal, external, and video
23 communications. Anyone interested in an event and
24 register on the website www.pa.gov/agencies/PHRC. She
25 noted upcoming events include a virtual lunch and

1 learn about the home buying process on November 20,
2 2024.]

3

4 DIRECTOR OF CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION

5 [Sheryl Meck noted the Civil Rights Division travels
6 the entire state visiting different communities. She
7 commented on two virtual panels that anybody could
8 register including one regarding Navigating Mental
9 Health. Ms. Meck noted also paying attention to
10 school board meetings and policies and matters of
11 that nature.]

12

13 OLD BUSINESS - None.

14

15 NEW BUSINESS - None.

16

17 PUBLIC COMMENT

18 [Anne Gruner, Associate Attorney at Diaspora Law,
19 addressed the Commission regarding the immigration
20 court process and the most common immigration court
21 applications including asylum, cancellation of
22 removal (the so-called ten-year green card) and
23 applications for minor children. She talked about
24 how the immigration court process works if you are
25 detained by ICE and will provide general guidance on

1 how to prepare for that situation.

2 An interpreter was also present.]

3 ***

4 [Kimberly Gavlick, Title II Adult Education and
5 Family Literacy Administrator, Luzerne County
6 Community College, addressed the Commission regarding
7 the Adult Learners Training and Assistance (ALTA)
8 program, which provides a range of programs to
9 empower individuals with the skills and knowledge
10 they need to achieve their personal, academic, and
11 professional goals. Ms. Gavlick noted that adults
12 can participate in free classes related to GED
13 preparation, ESL instruction, Family Literacy and
14 Digital Literacy.

15 Brochures were available to those interested in
16 the programs.]

17 ***

18 [Chair Bolstein called for public comment at this
19 time and asked the comments to be limited to several
20 minutes. He asked for comments regarding any
21 discrimination going on in the community and
22 reiterated that the PHRC has jurisdiction over
23 employment, housing, education, and public
24 accommodations.]

25 ***

1 [An audience member inquired as to the days and times
2 the English course is taught at the college. Ms.
3 Gavlick referred the audience member to the brochure
4 for further information regarding that matter.

5 Another audience member had questions regarding
6 how to petition for a sibling and the green card
7 process. Ms. Gruner noted siblings can take a long
8 time, approximately 15 to 20 years and suggested a
9 more detailed conversation regarding the matter.

10 There was discussion regarding the STEM program
11 and the frustration faculty face as they are not
12 conversant in Spanish.]

13 ***

14 [Chair Bolstein commented that every child in the
15 Commonwealth should be able to get a quality
16 education, and school districts need to find a way to
17 hire bilingual aids to assist in that process. He
18 noted, if applications for affordable housing are
19 denied but not denied on reasonable grounds and are
20 discriminatory, then a complaint should be brought to
21 the PHRC.]

22 ***

23 ADJOURNMENT

24 [The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.]

25 ***

1 [The next meeting is scheduled for November 25, 2024]

2

3

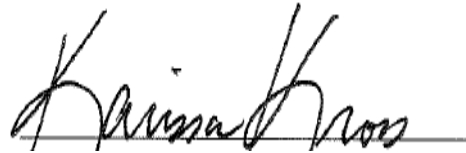
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CERTIFICATE

5

6 I hereby certify that the foregoing summary
7 minutes of the Pennsylvania Human Relations
8 Commission, was reduced to writing by me or under my
9 supervision, and that the minutes accurately
10 summarize the substance of the Pennsylvania Human
11 Relations Commission meeting.

12



13

Karissa Kross,

14

15

Minute Clerk

16

Sargent's Court Reporting

17

Service, Inc.

18



19

20 M. Joel Bolstein, Chairman

21



22

23 o/b/o Commissioner Mayur Patel

24

Mayur Patel, Secretary

25

26